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ABSTRACT

During the past decade, it has been made clear that educational structures and curricula must become responsive to student needs and aspirations. Many minority groups are calling for development of an educational system which includes the study of ethnic heritages and aspirations. The response has been the inauguration of Black, Chicano, and American Indian studies. The growing acceptability of ethnic courses offers hope for future educational innovations in which the study of history will play an integral role. The content of U.S. history should include the many ethnic cultures which have become part of the democratic experience. In this paper, the Mexican American culture, which has contributed to the nation's historical development, is singled out. Emphasizing a content structure using three history modules, the paper also demonstrates how these can be incorporated in teaching U.S. history. The presentation methodology and material development are left to the teacher. The three modules are: (1) America and Europe Meet; (2) Independence Movements; and (3) Immigration. These areas demonstrate where the multicultural approach can be used in history study. (NQ)

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INTEGRATION OF MEXICAN-AMERICAN HERITAGE INTO UNITED STATES HISTORY

Campus unrest of the past decade makes it patently clear that educational structures and curricula must become responsive to student needs and aspirations. Despite halting steps and excesses committed in meeting the challenge of the 1960's, few are the educators today who in blissful ignorance disregard the challenge. Educators of the 1970's are faced with implementation rather than debating the validity of the questions raised during the past decade.

The frequent rallying cry of the dicontented student is a call for relevance. Like many slogans it means different things to different people, but for many minority groups it often means the development of an educational system that allows for the study of ethnic heritages and aspirations. The response, frequently painfully slow, was the inauguration of Black, Chicano and Indian studies. Many times the offerings were at best token, but an important wedge was made in the time honored educational structure.

The growing acceptability of ethnic courses offers great hope for future innovations. The study of history plays on integral role in such studies and innovations.

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Historians and teachers of United States history in particular need to direct their selection of content material to include the rich history of the many ethnic cultures that have become part of the United States democratic experience. For lack of a better term the "opening up" of history content to embody specific ethnic heritages might be termed a multicultural approach. For purpose of this paper one such group--The Mexican American--has been singled out from the varied and rich cultural heritages, that have contributed to the historical development of the United States. The objective here is to suggest a content structure through the use of three history modules and demonstrate how these can be incorporated as integral elements in teaching the history of our nation. The selections carry implications for doing the same with other ethnic legacies. The emphasis will be on content. Methodology in presentation and development of materials can be left to the imaginative teacher or for discussion in another paper.

The proposed plan to integrate the Southwest or more specifically the Mexican-American heritage into United States history is not a novel venture. Herbert Eugene Bolton during the early years of the present century performed a pioneer service in this area. His United States history course at the University of California at Berkeley became the History of the Americas. This overall perspective of the history of the western hemisphere is a much more ambitious undertaking than what is proposed here. Nevertheless, Prof. Bolton's rationale for the course remains applicable to our present needs. The professor was critical of the traditional history of the United States , which saw history originating on the United States Atlantic seaboard and moving westward. For instance, he noted the shortcoming of his mentor, Frederick Jackson Turner, who saw the North American frontier as Anglo. For the California professor the Spanish frontier in our Southwest was of equal importance to the Anglo one or the French one, popularized by Francis Parkman.

Bolton was always quick to remind his contemporaries that when the Anglo frontier began with the founding of Jamestown, the Spanish frontier on the North was approaching Santa Fe, New Mexico. Bolton's plea for a more complete view of the history of the United States had already been voiced by Bernard Moses in 1890, who introduced the first Latin American history course at Columbia University. According to Moses:

> American history, in its proper sense, embraces all attempts to found and develop civilized society on this continent, whether these attempts are made by the English, the French, the Portuguese, or the Spanish. These attempts grasped in one comprehensive view indicate to the student of American history the field of his investigation. But under the present order of things, our studies in all the schools, from the lowest to the highest, are confined to the settlements and social growth on a comparatively small part of the territory of the American continent. The settlements and the development of civilized life on the rest of the continent constitute the subject-matter of what I call the neglected half of American history.[1]

Despite the fact that Moses failed to include the Indian heritage, his advice is still timely. If this admonition is heeded, then the Mexican-American heritage, as part of the Hispanic frontier legacy, will become an integral part of the study of our past.

The totality perspective of Bolton runs counter to some of the recent development in ethnic history as a segregated historical experience, unless the instructor makes a conscious effort to link the ethnic past with the historical experience of a nation. It is not suggested that such an approach is completely invalid since we traditionally segment broader historical accounts into manageable parts for purposes of deeper analytical study. But this need not be the case in a survey course. In such courses it is necessary to integrate the segmented ethnic past into the historical whole. If this is not done, it will defeat one of the essential goals in our educational system--namely to aid our students to live in a pluralistic society. In short if we fail to make ethnic history a meaningful part of the history of our country, ethnic histories are destined to remain illegitimate offsprings of an era plagued by minority discontent.

1. Lewis Hanke (ed.), Do the Americans Have a Common History? (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1964), p. 55.

A long range goal is the day when a given ethnic history carries the same prestige as a course in the Civil War and Reconstruction or a course on the frontier. Such convergences of history can best be achieved by integrating the ethnic experiences into a standard United States history survey course.

Few are the citizens in this country who deny the value of diversity and pluralism. Yet the much praised "melting pot" experience has frequently paid lip service to this aspiration. A congressman of Polish-American background not so long ago remarked that this concept has resulted in making us all look like the Model T Ford. If we are truly committed to a plural society, we might do well to look to our neighbors south of the Rio Grande. Here we see a developing mestizo culture, which Jose Vasconcelos of Mexico called "la raza cósmica" It is precisely this historical experience that is present in our Southwest. This is not to say that Latin America is a mecca free of racial and cultural strife, but rather the concept of "la raza cósmica" permits more cultural diversity than does our "melting pot."

The latter point was well stated by Melville Herskovite in his Myth of the Negro Past. He described the melting pot experience as subtraction and substitution. For him the Latin American experience is one of synthesis and modification. One can only speculate what the history of our country would be like, if the latter had been more prevalent than the former.

It is important to assert that the Latin American experience is not completely foreign to our national development. We need look only to our historical experience in the borderland area, where "la raza" is still very much alive. Students who study the Mexican-American past are quick to grasp this. The benefits can be shared with a wider audience if it is incorported and made a part of our national experience and focus.

Although many multicultural instances and sequences could be cited, the concept of "bicultural modules" can be illustrated by using three examples. The selected modules are not theoretical proposals but examples taken from actual classroom experience over the past

dozen years. The implementation of the approach becomes imperative when there is a genuine committment to make United States history relevant to Mexican-American students.

Module I--America and Europe Meet

The opening of the New World to the Old involves more than the trips of Columbus to the Americas. The story begins with background civilizations: Indian, European and African. The study of the background civilizations will better prepare the student to recognize the cultural legacies of these civilizations as they contribute to shaping subsequent history. In the case of the Iberians and Indians special attention should be focused on the development of a mestizo culture. In certain areas of Latin America this mestizo experience also includes the African culture. The mestizo or la raza development is not characteristic of the Anglo colonial past. In the English colonies the marriage of John Rolfe and Pocahontas is seen as unique and worthy of special commemoration. In the Iberian-Indian relations it is a foregone conclusion, a daily occurrence which certainly does not merit a special commemorative plaque.

The mestizo experience can be concretely illustrated through the study of colonial institutions. In the area of religion, the Indian frequently became a Christian although it was a peculiar type of Indian Christianity. Economic institutions provide other examples of the merging of cultures. Spanish and Indian products enriched the lives of both peoples. The combination of Indian corn and Spanish cattle became the mainstay and life blood of the American west. The Spaniard brought architectual styles but the Indians did the building. Thus one need not be surprised to see Santiago (the apostle St. James) in some Church buildings take on an appearance that is more Indian than Spanish. The patroness of Mexico, Our Lady of Guadalupe, is mestizo, not Spaniard.

The Spaniard saw the Indian as a citizen of the crown. The English colonizer viewed him as a foreigner, an obstacle to frontier expansion and an adversary. This does not mean that the Indian always fared well under the Spanish master. It does imply that potentially the Indian in the Spanish empire enjoyed more rights than those that fell within the area claimed by the English. The former prepared the citizen for a tradition of cultural diversity whereas the latter was conditioned to think in terms of a monoculture. Such different perspectives hold great significance in understanding later developments in history.

The above content material stresses contrast between the two colonizing powers. The approach however need not blind the student to the similarities in both colonizing systems. Both English and Spaniards were interested in raw materials that their colonies could offer. Both nations adhered to the economic theory of mercantilism with the Spaniards somewhat more efficient in enforcing the policy.

Even in the political area, where many differences existed, one can also note similarities. For instance, the Spanish cabildo and the English town council have much in common. Both the cabildo and the town council were supposed to represent the interests of the people at the local level. Obviously true representation was frequently an ideal rather than actual practice. A case in point was the Spanish sale of cabildo offices, but at the same time both types of councils carried the germs of democracy. Thus in Mexico, as well as in other parts of Latin America, cabildos took the lead in proclaiming independence at the beginning of the 19th century. In the United States too town meetings were forums for discussion and decision.

The colonial heritages of the Mexican-American and Anglo-American contain striking differences and similarities. Both are part of North America's colonial past and carry a legacy that is and should be recognized as part of our cultural heritage today, and both should be given a formal place in history course content.

Module II-Independence Movements

No survey course dares to omit the independence struggle of the English colonies. Yet, the traditional presentation leaves the impression that it was the independence of the United States. Geographically this movement affected a very small portion of the present day United States--the thirteen colonies and to a limited degree the area known as the Old Northwest. This perspective overlooks the fact of the continued colonial status of the Florida area and trans-Mississippi west, which today constitutes considerably more than half of the continental United States. An even more obvious neglect is the independence movement of Mexico, which holds the key to the history of our present Southwest. Thus, not without sound historical reasons have Mexican-Americans been calling our attention to the need to commemorate Diez y Seis de Septiembre.

Both movements have much in common and can bestudied in terms of American colonies seeking nationhood. The list of causes for the Mexican movement will have a familiar ring to the Anglo-American ear. As example, the following can be cited; rebellion against the mercantilistic policy of the mother country, a demand for political control of their own affairs and a desire to develop a more egalitarian society. Added to these causes one dare not forget 18th century Enlightened doctrines, which stressed sovereignty, rights of man, and the worth of the individual just to name a few. These Enlightened teachers served as intellectual stimulants for the thinkers and leaders, who supported independence both on the Atlantic seaboard and in Mexico.

An added reason for the study of the two movements is that the earlier movement in the English colonies served as a model for the Mexican one. The writings and actions of Padres Miguel Hidalgo y Castillo and José María Morelos make it quite clear that they were not oblivious to what had taken place in the English colonies. Even Spain, who supported the English colonies for her own imperial interests recognized the dangerous precedent that had been set by the English colonies.

Not only were the reasons for independence aspirations similar but there is even a more striking parallel in the setting up of political institutions during the early days of nationhood. Mexico experimented briefly with monarchy under Iturbide between 1821 to 1823 but the desire for a republican form of government had been voiced by Padre Morelos in 1813-1814. The hopes of Morelos were realized in the Constitution of 1824, which bears striking similarities to the United States one. It provided for a federalistic structure and a three departmental system of government with checks and balances. Differences, like the recognition of the Catholic Church in Mexico as the official religion are expressions of the tradition of the Mexican people. The lack of such a provision in the United States constitution represents the desire of a people developing religious pluralism. The influence of the United States constitution on the Mexican one of 1824 is obvious.

Apart from the similarity and influence factors, the Mexican Constitution of 1824 deserves attention since it was the constitution governing our Southwest until 1836. It also provides a fresh insight into the study of the Texas separatist movement. This approach is an effective challenge to treatment of Texas independence movement as "white hats v. brown hats."

Treating both independence movements together will make Anglo-American and Mexican-American students conscious of the contributions of their respective ancestral group to the political separation of America from European domination. The independence contributions were followed by achievements in setting up republican forms of government. In our Southwest then, Padre Hidalgo should be as well known as George Washington.

Module III--Immigration

Standard treatises of immigration movements into the United States have their setting on Ellis Island. It cannot be denied that a vast number of the immigrants to our country have entered via this portal but it fails to include other important immigrant groups who entered via Pacific coast ports and the Rio Grande.

Prior to 1920, immigrations from Latin America, and in our case from Mexico, were small when compared to the European counterpart. Up to 1920, immigration from Latin America reached a maximum of approximately 5 percent of the total number of immigrants. Between 1920 to 1963 this small percentage climbed to approximately 25 percent. During the 1920's the Mexican immigrants accounted for almost half of this 25 percent. The Depression years of the 1930's and World War II era witnessed a drastic decline in Mexican immigration but 10 percent to 12 percent (Mexican Americans) of the total number of immigrants tends to become the norm for the years beginning with 1953 through 1967.[2] The foregoing percentage figures indicate the significance of Mexican-American immigration. The even greater significance of this immigration to our Southwest requires no further comment here.

Statistical analysis provides us with the skelton: it does not give us the flesh. Any treatise of European immigration is concerned with the push and pull factors which cause people to migrate. Futhermore, historians of immigration movements are concerned with the question of who is the immigrant. For instance, historicans rightly stress the departure of the poor Irishmen fleeing the potato famine in Ireland in the 1840's to seek job opportunities in the United States. The Liberal Germans of 1848 fled their country beset with revolutions after these ended in failures. Desire for more intellectual freedom and economic betterment became the pull factors in the United States. Harsh economic conditions, military draft and religious discrimination are frequent push factors in causing Europearss to leave their homeland in the

2. (Statistical information taken from Leo Grebler, Mexican Immigration to the United States: The Record and its Implication, Advance Report 2 (University of California, Los Angelos: Mexican-American Study Project, 1966 and Annual Reports of the United States Immigration and Naturalization Service 1965-1967.)

19th and early decades of the present century. This part of the story of immigration merits its deserved attention in our history texts, how much does it explain about Mexican-American immigration?

The Mexican-American like the European-American has had push and pull factors. These are still in evidence today as anyone near the banks of the Rio Grande can observe. Among the push factors was the turmoil created by the Revolution of 1910. Mexicans sought refuge in the United States for political and religious reasons . The majority fled simply to keep body and soul together. Northern Mexico is a poor land and the proverbial greener pastures were seen on the other side of the Rio Grande. The Revolution of 1910 during its initial phase merely aggravated the hash economic conditions. The economic plight of much of northern Mexico is far from being resolved even at the present moment.

While Mexico was undergoing the Revolution of 1910 and its aftermath, the United States offered pull factors to the Mexican. The development and expansion of agriculture in the Southwest proved to be lucrative employment for many Mexican families, that is "lucrative" by Mexican standards. The military draft of World War I created a shortage of labor, which in turn was filled by Mexican workers. For the more affluent political and religious exiles from Mexico, the United States provided political and religious freedom.

The listing of push and pull factors shows frequent historical parallels between the Mexican-American immigrants and the European ones. There are noteworthy differences. For instance, a war in which the United States is involved can be deterrant to immigration from Europe but yet be a pull factor for the Mexican-Americans. Likewise there can be much similarity in experiences that the immigrant encountered in his new land. The Anglo Protestant animosity towards the Irish Catholic can be very meaningful to a Mexican American who can cite a parrallel record. The newly arrived Polish factory worker in

Chicago can favorably match his hard working conditions and low pay with the plight of the Mexican-American fruit picker.

A profitable comparative analysis between European immigrants and Mexican-Americans can also be made in regard to meeting the challenge of the "melting pot". In seeking the loudly proclaimed goal of becoming Americanized the European-American paid a price. In the process he frequently lost his language, traditions, customs and even at times his religion. Having now become part of middle America, the European descendent is faced with an identity crisis--namely what does it mean to be Americanized? He frequently answers the question in terms of what he lost in his cultural heritage. On the positive side the immigrant did provide a better economic lot for his descendents. He also may have gained freedoms that frequently were not part of his life in the mother country. But for this positive gain he lost much of his cultural heritage. Today ethnic groups are raising the valid question whether the price of "Americanization" should have been the destruction of ones cultural heritage.

There are many Mexican-Americans who have gone through the same cycle as that of the European immigrant. But this apparent resemblance here can be very misleading since there are some very significant differences. First of all the Mexican crossed the Rio Grande which is a far cry from crossing the Atlantic. The Rio Grande was and is an artificial border whereas the Atlantic became a barrier to the cultural ties with the mother country. Secondly the Mexican-American tended to settle in the Southwest from where he continued his cultural bonds with his people in Mexico. Thirdly, as noted in the immigration figures, the Mexican-American is a recent immigrant--that is since 1910, although many families can trace their roots to early settlements in the Southwest. According to Carey McWilliams [5]

percent of the Mexican-Americans in the Southwest as late as 1960 were either born in Mexico or were the children of parents born there. By 1970 this no longer held true since 80 percent were native born--a fact due undoubtedly to high fertility and low median age. Finally the Mexican-American moved into a land that originally belonged to his ancestors. He did not arrive as a complete stranger.

In "melting pot" terminology these recent immigrants are frequently far from being "Americanized." Even if one could accept the "melting pot" as a desireable goal, one would still have to question whether this is realistic in a borderland area such as the Southwest where the confluence of cultures is the norm rather than the exception. Attempting to present immigrant history as a westward movement completely neglects the Mexican-American immigrant experience in the Southwest. Had historians devoted their attention to the Mexican-American they might well have raised questions about the "melting pot", which they tended to accept uncritically. With the Mexican-American comes a la raza tradition, which also seeks to answer the question of cultural and racial diversity. Hopefully it is not too late to examine this rich experience. As teachers and historians we must examine this as a significant part of the total historical experience of our country.

Obviously the foregoing three models leave much unsaid about other Mexican-American content material that could be incorporated into a survey history of the United States. The purpose here was to demonstrate three areas in which it can be done and in which there is adequate and available material to initiate the approach.

The implications as to content material are clear from the three cited examples. Implications to become more meaningful must go beyond the classroom wall. Thus pictures commemorating the independence of the United States must be balanced by pictures commemorating the same in Mexico . Likewise students will need to celebrate Diez y Seis de Septiembre as well as other North American holidays.

Finally one can hope that a better understanding of our Mexican-American heritage in the Southwest can aid us with a glimpse into the culture of our other brothers south of the Rio Grande. Only a provincial mind is apt to overlook this prospect.

Presently the people of the United States are in the midst of preparing for the bicentennial. One of the major selected themes is the democratic experience--past, present and future. In the study of this experience we must not repeat the mistake of neglecting the Mexican-American's experience, even though the story may prove painful and embarrassing to Anglo-American ears.

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